How Jarvis Got His House

Mrs. Prosser

Cann Hall Baptist Chapel

SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Awarded to

Albert Hutchins

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C. H. J. YEWEN, Supt.

Shilling Books for Working People. (88)

A Strange Visitor.

Page 22.

HOW JARVIS GOT HIS HOUSE,

An Incident of Life in the Black Country,

AND

SALUTING THE COLOURS.

BY MRS. PROSSER,

AUTHOR OF

"The Oldest Fisherman in the World," etc.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,

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AND 164, PICCADILLY.

HOW JARVIS GOT HIS HOUSE.

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HOW JARVIS GOT HIS HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

The Worth of a Character.

It was dinner time; four or five men lay about on the turf, others were still busy eating. The sun shone in its full strength on the spot, but they were partly sheltered by a line of trucks, and not being troubled by trifling discomforts, nor careful about complexions where the shadow did not fall, it signified nothing to those who were more exposed.

Work was going on upon the road which the Common on one side bordered. Lines were being laid for a tramway between the town close at hand and its neighbour a few miles away. Many hands were employed, some being properly pitmen who had been obliged to give up their ordinary labour on account of water in the coal-pit.

The reader, very likely, has never been in the Black Country, as the region of coal and

iron in the Midland Counties is called; if so, he should not suffer a dark name or prejudice to keep him away from it. There is a strange weirdness in its beauty; but beauty, to an artistic eye, it certainly has. If he could look across the Common where these men lay, he would confess it.

One of them, by name Joss Coly, as he lay prostrate was rubbing the turf with the hand that did not support his head, and occasionally looking fixedly towards the road, while his companions went on to sum up the cost of the tramway concern, and prophesy its failure.

'Twon't pay, Joss, 'twon't pay; they'll see it won't pay!"

He that spoke was a shortish, strongly-knit man with red hair, which seemed to grow wherever it liked all over his face.

"Never mind," said Joss, "they'll pay us; that's the p'int for we."

"P'int it may be, and p'int course it is, but it's not the tottle, for there's a many hands consarned in the business, an' if the job goes smash (as I b'lieve 'twill), then there's more nor one as 'll be throwed out o' work, for how can them pay as hasn't got no money, and who's to work as can't get pay? You don't see to the fur end, Joss!"

"Don't want," replied Joss, rolling himself round on his back preparatory to rising.

"Time's not up," said the other, "what's the good o' moving?"

"A deal, when it comes pleasanter than keeping still," cried Joss, now standing erect and giving himself a stretch and a shake.

A fine handsome man was Joss, with a face indicating no ordinary spirit and character. Seeing that his closing the debate was not well taken, he looked down with a half smile at Sonsie Bill, as the red-haired man was called, and pointing to another man who had sat listening to the argument and every now and then throwing in an approving or dissenting remark, said, "Here's Jemmy; if thee'st got more to say, he'll listen, and if thee wants talk he'll talk till this day week, and never know no tire!"

The truth was that Joss, while he had seemed busy examining the turf, had had his thoughts as well as his eyes upon the road, and when he saw a figure in the far distance that interested him much more than the question of the tramway's success or failure, he turned the orator, Sonsie, over to another, and left the Common. At first he moved with a leisurely step, but when he had gained the end of a street that led from the roadside, his motion quickened; he struck into it, and stood before the door of one of the houses in it, waiting till the figure he had been watching should approach.

He was not kept long.

"Gaffer!" he cried, to a very respectable-looking man, "Canst give we a lift?"

"A lift, Joss, what sort of a lift?" asked Mr. Grey, the Scripture-reader of the district, with a good-humoured smile.

"Just a word put upon paper, as can be showed to make it plain as we's a man to be trusted," said Joss.

"Oh, a character?" inquired Mr. Grey.

"Ay, ay; maybe it's a sort o' a character; it's just a word saying as thee knows we, and what be's like."

"And I'm to tell the truth about you?" asked Mr. Grey, laughingly.

"Don't want nobbut the truth; lies is no benefit," said Joss, simply and earnestly.

"Good. Then I will put down that my friend, Joss Coly, is a right good, honest, hard-working fellow; and if I had a thousand pounds I'd trust him with it."

Joss clutched his hand with the true Black Country grip, till he cried out, "Oh, leave me some whole bones!"

They then went together into Mr. Grey's house, before which they had been standing, and the required testimony was written and duly signed.

"Ay, sure, gaffer," cried Joss, who had watched its execution, admiring greatly the

readiness of the writer, both in penmanship and composition; and added, "glad thee's put thee's name!"

"And who is to have this?" asked Mr. Grey, remarking that a certificate unsigned would be worthless.

"Who," replied Joss, assuming a mysterious confidential air. "Why, it's for Honourable Cox!"

"Who? What Cox?" inquired Mr. Grey.

"Why him as is on our carts, sure!" answered Joss; "don't know never another, but him as keeps cows up on the Common."

"But, Joss," said Mr. Grey, hesitating to give the paper; "my word won't go for much with him."

"No! But gaffer, whose word be's good if thee's besn't!" cried Joss in great surprise.

Mr. Grey laughed outright at his unfeigned astonishment, and answered, "My good friend, he never heard of me. How should the Honourable Mr. Cox hear of *me?*"

Now Joss was fairly puzzled He had almost felt that the Honourable Cox, with whose name he was so familiar, having it constantly before his eyes on trucks and carts, would know him at first sight, and as to "Gaffer Grey," who was looked on as a walking Bible, and was called by most there "The Collier's Friend," he couldn't compre-

hend how any one connected with the place could be ignorant of him.

"Ah, Joss," said Mr. Grey in reply to this, "London is a large place, and full of bustle and fine folks, and the day isn't long enough for a thought to be spent there on such as you and I are. Depend on it, whatever we may think of ourselves, others, beyond our beat, think but little of us."

Joss screwed up his mouth and looked thoughtful.

"What business have you in hand that takes you to Mr. Cox?" asked his friend, noticing his grave expression. "You know it will be an expensive journey; I'm sure you are a prudent man, and wouldn't throw away your hard earnings on nonsense!"

"Ben't nonsense," replied Joss, "business is pertickler; got the money—plenty (slapping his pocket)—and if it goes for nothing, no matter; it's upon conscience to go, and all the more strong for what thee didst say at lecture, last Wednesday evening."

"What did I say?" asked Mr. Grey.

"Thee saidst a power o' things; but one on 'em struck in very strong: 'Which art in heaven,' that were the word. Mind, gaffer, thee said it wasn't put in the book which 'wast' in heaven, nor's a 'going to be' in heaven, but plain '*art.*' It come very plain

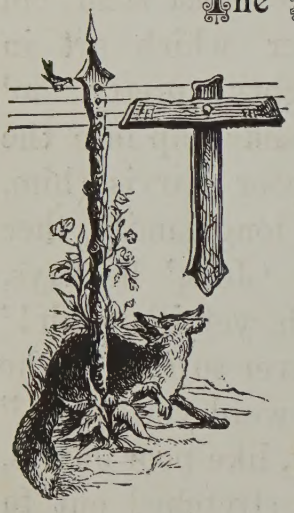
when thee said how the Lord Jesus teached the disciples to pray, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' Thee saidst our Father were in heaven then, all them years gone by, and was ever before that, and still is there, and will be for ever and ever; so, thee said (and a good word it was), thee needn't send thee's prayers, thee doesn't know where, just like arrows shot about in any quarter, but thee canst send 'em straight up to 'our Father which art in heaven.' Oh, 'twere mighty pretty an' comforting! and when we looked up into the sky as we comed away, poor Jarvis (him, gaffer, wi' the sick wife and long family, thee knows him well), he says, 'Joss,' he says, 'there's the throne! it's high, yet it's nigh!' Poor Jarvis! his heart were ever so full, but he got a deal o' comfort by that word you spoke."

Mr. Grey, with a full heart, like poor Jarvis, grasped the huge dark hand stretched out to him, till Joss, laughing, cried, "Heh, gaffer, but thee canst break bones, surely. God 'in heaven' bless thee, gaffer; do thee send up a word to Him to help in this job; ay, sure thee wilt; and thee won't tell about this" (pointing to the paper).

Mr. Grey promised to keep the affair quiet. "An' thee shalt know the tottle when we's back again," answered Joss, hastening back to his work.

CHAPTER II.

The Honourable Cox.



THAT evening, as the men were returning homewards from their work, Sonsie Bill looked round as if he missed some one.

"What's become o' Joss?" he asked.

Two or three replied that Joss had gone off the moment work was over, without a word to any one.

"Gone to see he's Liz!" suggested one.

"More like to be gone to see Jarvis," said another; "Joss is very took up wi' him just now."

"Joss is always took up wi' any one in trouble," chimed in a third, who had known his sympathy by experience.

Meanwhile the subject of their inquiries was busy making arrangements for his journey.

They were very simple; how to get to the train unnoticed was his consideration, luggage formed no item in his deliberations.

At length the time for starting came, and he was seated in a third-class carriage on the way to Birmingham; thence to proceed to London by the night train. A good conscience and honest toil make a fine recipe for securing sleep, and he was soon in a dreamless slumber in the corner where he had placed himself.

He was sensible of the stoppage of the train at various stations, but before it had started again, his head was back in the corner and his arm resting on the only article with which he had encumbered himself; this was a huge bundle, and he seemed to take as much care of it as if it had been a baby.

At length Paddington Station was reached, and he opened his eyes very wide as he saw the passengers turn out, emptying the carriages as if by magic.

More by an indistinct sense of necessity than any conviction that it was the right thing to do, he made up the rear and strode from the carriage on to the platform with his bundle in his arms; he stood there loooking up and down and all around him entirely bewildered by his novel surroundings. It was about seven o'clock in the morning; the crowd had dispersed. "Dear heart!" he thought; if he

could only meet with somebody who could tell him where to find Honourable Cox.

He saw several doors and office-like-looking places, but was puzzled as to the utility of applying at any one of them. "Sure London is a big place" he murmured, and something like a blank feeling of disappointment arose as he wished that he had not, from a desire to keep his enterprise a secret, refrained from making inquiries as to the whereabouts of the Honourable.

His sanguine expectations of immediate success began to cool, and doubts though not regrets to arise as to whether he had been wise in his project. Suddenly he remembered "which art in heaven." And with a brightened countenance, he exclaimed, "There now, sure as I'm here, and as gaffer said, He knows all as I'm a-doing, and all as I wants" —and he leaned against the platform rail, and said softly, "Oh, please help me—our Father which art in heaven—please to remember poor Jarvis, and now I can't do nothing for him if I don't find the Honourable." The thought that he was not on his own errand, but on that of a brother, doubtless helped him, and his heart grew strong as his prayer went up to heaven.

He had only just finished it when he felt a hand on his shoulder, and, turning quickly round, he saw a gentleman standing beside

him. He started, and rose to his full height, which by comparison, greatly reduced the size of his companion, who looked almost nervous as he watched him going up—up—up.

"I was afraid you were ill, friend; or in trouble," he said in a kind voice. "Are you in want of anything, or anybody?"

"Ben't ill, nor in trouble, gaffer; 'bliged to thee the same, but wanting of somebody I be, sure enough."

Now Joss's faith was as near to that of a little child as possible: he had asked his Father in heaven to remember poor Jarvis; in other words, to help him to find Mr. Cox, and He had done it; He had sent a friend to tell him where the Honourable was to be found! This was just a fulfilment of the promise, "Ask and ye shall receive."

"Surely," he thought for a moment, "this ben't the Honourable's self?" So when the stranger, in reply to his saying, "he wanted somebody," asked, "Who is it?" he looked in eager hope as he answered, "Why it's one Honourable Cox, I wants;" adding in an earnest tone, "Thee be'sn't him, be's thee?"

"No, my name is not Cox," replied the stranger, who was much taken with his simplicity; "What is he? You call him 'honourable;' what is his Christian name?"

"'S'pose he've got one; think it's——"

Here he took a mental review of all the coal-carts and trucks with the name on it, but nothing presented itself but Honourable and Cox. He shook his head.

"Well, well! come with me to this office; we shall find a Directory there," said the stranger. "London is a large place, and Cox is a common name, but if your Cox is a Londoner, we shall find him safe enough in the Directory. I have time, I see;" comparing his watch with the clock. "Happily for you, I am much too early; my train will not start for twenty minutes."

He then walked briskly towards the office, and Joss, rejoicing in having undoubtedly received an answer to his prayer, followed him.

"You can't remember anything but Cox?" asked the stranger, as his eye ran down the long list of those who bore that name.

"No, only as he be Honourable Cox; but that's not on the carts and trucks; but now, be's there ever a H put afore one o' them Coxes?"

Again the list was searched, and the stranger cried, "H—H—it isn't Hamilton Cox, is it? Here's the Honourable Hamilton Cox—is that the name?"

"'B'lieve it's the gaffer hisself!" said Joss, who in his joy felt almost as if the object of

his search was bodily in the book, and would come forth to end all his difficulties.

The stranger, who greatly admired Joss's physiognomy, which, handsome as it was, owed much of its beauty to its fine benevolent expression, said, "Then I had better write down the address for you?"

Joss assented with a grateful smile.

The stranger took a card from his pocket, and wrote the address and gave it to him, saying, "Perhaps you were never in London before?"

Joss shook his head.

"Then of course it is all perfectly strange to you?"

Joss nodded vigorously.

"Then," said his friend, "the best thing you can do is to get into a cab here; I will call one for you and tell the man to drive you to this address. It is very early; much too early for a gentleman like Mr. Cox to see people on business, I should think; but if you get driven to the house, you can wait there, I suppose?"

"Bide any time!" exclaimed Joss, joyfully.

"Come away, then!" said the stranger, and hailed a cab. Turning to Joss, he said, "You have money? you can afford a cab?"

"Plenty o' money," said Joss, slapping the pocket which contained all his worldly riches.

"Very good," replied the stranger, who

explained to the driver that he must take his fare to the exact address on the card, for he was a stranger in London; then telling Joss what he was to pay, he left him, heartily wishing him success, and walked quickly away without staying for thanks.

"God bless thee, an' all the like o' thee!" cried Joss, as he watched him vanishing into the booking-office. "Thee'st one o' our Father's children—hallowed be His name for sending of him to help me when I were in this fix!"

The cabman had been much struck with Joss's Goliath build and pleasant face, and wondered as much as any thorough-paced Londoner could wonder at a thing that did not concern himself, what could take a man like him to such an address as that for which he was bound.

When they had arrived at the door, he left the box to let him out.

"I don't believe the servants are stirring yet," he said going up the steps, "don't think it'll be any use to ring!".

The comparative silence that reigned in the square, the closed shutters in most of the houses and other indications that his conjecture was right, made him hesitate to ring.

"It's only eight o'clock; here comes the postman?" he said, "what will you do?"

"Might get some breakfast," said Joss, who felt very hungry.

The cabman told him there was a very good place at hand, cheap and clean, where he would fare well.

Joss nodded, and thrusting his hand into the depths of his pocket brought out his canvas bag, from which he took a handful of coins, gold, silver, and copper, and began to consider what he had to pay.

"What was't the gaffer said I should give thee?" he asked.

The man honestly told him, but added that as he seemed to be so flush of money, glancing as he spoke at his well-filled hand, an odd sixpence over would be very acceptable to him, and could not hurt one so rich as his fare seemed to be.

Joss looked at him; he thought he looked tired, perhaps he was hungry, for his face was thin and pale.

"Hast had thee's breakfast?" he asked.

"Short commons," answered cabby. "It's hard times in London, everything is riz in price but our fares; and that comes, as you may understand, very ill-convenient."

Joss immediately paid the fare and gave him a shilling over. The man was very thankful, and took him to an eating-house near, bidding him mind the way they went, that he

might find the house of the Honourable Hamilton Cox when he returned after his breakfast.

But Joss, who would not have feared to explore the most intricate recesses of a coal-mine by torchlight, was quite in the clouds in his present circumstances and surroundings; he bargained with the man to take him back when he was ready, offering him anything he liked in the shop to complement his short commons with, if he would wait, promising not to be long.

The offer was promptly accepted, and the cabman sitting on the step of the cab regaled himself to his entire satisfaction.

When Joss reappeared, his meal being over, he quite startled the cabman with the fine figure he made. He had unrolled his bundle, which held a cloak he had bought before starting, very ample in its dimensions and surmounted by a magnificent fur collar, fastened by a huge brass clasp and chain.

Joss not being intimate with the fashions was quite satisfied with his purchase, which he had procured at a general salesman's, who let him have it cheap as it was a very old shopkeeper.

Fashionable or not, it was remarkably becoming to him, setting off his noble form to great advantage.

"Bought this for to go to see the Honourable," he said, noticing the surprise and admiration on the cabman's face; "being all of a hurry I never thought to put it on, till I got into yon place (pointing to the eating-house), and then I couldn't make out where to stow it, being no room on the bench, and it come to me, On your back, man! that's where to put it."

Many turned to look at him as he got into the cab, attracted by his imposing array; but their notice was lost on him, his mind was fixed on one object, he looked at no one, and knew not that any looked on him.

Right glad he was when he once more reached the place of his destination. The cabman, whose good breakfast had made him all alive, told him it was right now; shutters were open, and he would be sure to make himself heard if he knocked or rung.

Joss, rather encumbered by his cloak, walked up the steps, and gave a hearty salute to the door with his clenched fist, that being to him the natural way of announcing his wish to be let in.

It happened that the hall porter was close to the door, and hearing the singular summons for admission, he looked through the side window, to ascertain if his suspicion that it was a saucy beggar were correct. He was struck

with surprise on beholding the visitor, and immediately opened the door.

"Wants to see Honourable Cox," said Joss, in a tone so independent, so lofty, that it vouched for him being no beggar.

The porter told him that Mr. Cox was not to be seen so early, but if the gentleman would give him his card he would send it up to him.

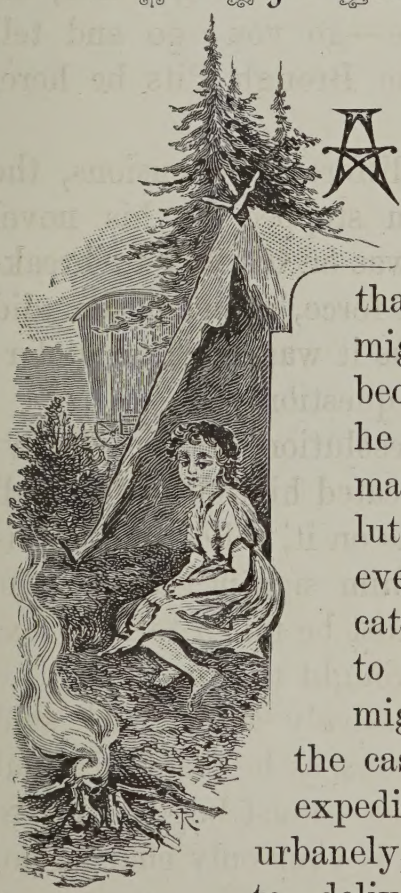
"Card!" cried Joss, much perplexed, "Ha'n't no card but this'n!" and he pulled out the address written for him by the kind gentleman at Paddington Station.

The porter examined it and remarked that that was merely Mr. Cox's name and address; what he wanted was the name and address of the gentleman who presented it and his business.

While holding this parley he had time to make observations on the stranger, and got more and more puzzled as he went on. At first sight, Joss looked, every inch, a foreigner of distinction. Was he a Russian, or a German, or any other outlandish refugee, so many of whom were continually applying to his master for advice or other assistance? He would have decided on this being the case, —but those hands, black from the grits, with a blackness which had become ingrained! Still he knew from report that foreigners were eccentric in their views of many things, cleanliness among the rest.

CHAPTER III.

The Right Door to Knock at.



ALTHOUGH the speedy ejection of Joss commended itself to the porter, a misgiving that such a proceeding might be a difficult one became very strong as he looked at the commanding form and resolute face of the intruder; every inch of him indicated his ability and will to carry out any plan he might propose. This being the case, temporising seemed expedient; so he said, very urbanely, as there was no card to deliver, and, therefore, no name to announce, he must request him to call

again in two or three hours; probably by that time Mr. Cox would be visible.

Joss was some little time taking in his meaning, but when he had done it a cloud came over his bronzed face; he looked down on the porter with what his fellow-pitmen called his thunder-and-lightning look, and answered, in a tone expressive of no surrender, "Go! I but now come! Canna go, man, till I see the Honourable—go you; go and tell him as Joss Coly from Brough Pits be here, an' wants him."

If he had been of different dimensions, the porter, who had been stopped by his novel summons just as he was on his way to breakfast, would have tried force, as persuasion did not seem promising; as it was, such an undertaking was out of the question.

Joss, seeing his irresolution, and not knowing whence it arose, seated himself at the hall table, planted his arms on it, rolled up in his cloak, and looked at him significantly to the effect that either he must be taken to Mr. Cox, or Mr. Cox must be brought to him.

"I am really excessively sorry, sir," said the porter a little nervous, as he made his final trial, "but I must insist—must beg of you to do as I say; indeed it is your only chance, go, and as I said——"

"Go!" exclaimed Joss in his full stento-

rian voice and racy dialect, "Ner' but er shanner!"

Finding he could make no impression, the porter left him master of the position, while he went to his fellow-servants to consult as to what was the best course to adopt.

So Joss was triumphant, and felt that the victory was on his side.

Having giving vent to a few indistinct complaints against the inhospitable treatment he had received, he began to consider what he should do if, after having got within hail of Mr. Cox, he should be prevented from seeing him. The kind gentleman at Paddington Station, who, he felt sure, was sent to his help in answer to his prayer, would then have failed in his intention; "Sure, he comed while I axed for poor Jarvis to be done well by—so er did! Good; there's naught to hinder. I'll ax again."

Resting his face on his hands he said earnestly: "Our Father which art in heaven, please do Thee think upon Jarvis again, an' give me a sight o' the Honourable."

As he raised his head, it struck him that the man who had so uncivilly left him might not return; in that case, what should he do?

"I'll go look for'n," he said. As the red baize door which divided the hall door from the house and servants' offices was closed, he

looked to the stairs, which he was free to mount, for at that early hour the servants were not about.

After a moment's indecision, he walked up, thinking how different the mine ladders were from the Honourable's staircase, which, from its very shallow steps, he found it difficult to mount.

He came to a landing and saw closed doors here and there, and, as it appeared to him, everywhere. What was to be done next! To make known his business he must find some one, to find some one he must get through one of those doors, to get through either of them he must knock.

Knocking was easy work enough, but which was the right door to knock at?

One was scarcely closed, and as he stood quite near to it, on the soft fleecy mat, he heard voices within. His doubts vanished; he had found somebody. So he gave his ordinary fist-fashioned salute, which, however, failed in its full force, through the opening of the door at the first stroke of the assault.

It would be difficult to say whether Joss or the inmates of the apartment were more surprised when each beheld the other. The whole aspect of the room, with the group gathered round a writing-table, was as great a novelty to him as he was to them.

Before they had time to make inquiries, he advanced and asked pardon in sincere but blunt terms for his intrusion.

"Wants badly to see the Honourable; er's Joss Coly, come from Brough; it's pertickler business. Canst tell me, gaffer, aught of'n—where he be?"

These concluding words he addressed to a gentleman sitting at the table, who looked to him the most hopeful of the party, for his handsome good-humoured face wore a very benevolent smile, and, altogether, there was something most prepossessing in his air and manner.

One look at Joss's countenance was enough to give him a passport as safe company. The gentleman, who saw and felt this, replied,

"Well friend, we 'are all honourable men' here; which of us do you want?"

"Wants Honourable—summat (his memory failing him)—Cox?" replied Joss.

"I am that same summat," said the gentleman, laughing; "and pray, friend, what do you want with me?"

Joss could hardly contain himself for joy to think that again his prayer had been heard and answered; it was with some difficulty he replied,

"Maybe, Honourable, thee'dst like to see as er *be* Joss Coly, from Brough; an' as er's got

a good word fro' the gaffer—Grey—him as teaches us poor fellers—wilt see it?"

"By all means," said Mr. Cox, who was sufficiently alive to the dialect and manners of the Black Country to take in the whole truth of his visitor—one of his colliers from Brough! While Joss was diving into his pocket to get Mr. Grey's character, the rest of the company looked at him with much interest and amusement, but they were no more to him than the chairs they sat on; he was not for a moment diverted from the one object he had in view.

"This'n bin it, Honourable!" he cried, producing his certificate.

"Ah! and who is Mr. Grey?" asked Mr. Cox.

"Them very words er said!" exclaimed Joss; "er said as Honourable knowed naught about he—but him do know 'bout thee, Honourable."

"What does he know?" inquired Mr. Cox.

"He knows thee's master o' the Brough colliers—and owns all the pits there—an' he do pray for thee at every cottage lecture, sure he do!"

"Greatly obliged to him; may I ask why?" said Mr. Cox, who hardly knew how to understand this expression of goodwill, whether it indicated any moral need in him, or the desire for his prosperity. Joss, who did not perceive

the smile that some faces at the table wore, replied with great simplicity and humility,

"Why? because thee be's we's gaffer, Honourable."

"Ah, very true," said Mr. Cox, "and, now, friend, what is this 'pertickler business'—must I have it in private, or can you tell it here?"

"Thee shalt ha't—sure," cried Joss. "Maybe thee'st got no 'quaintance wi' poor Jarvis?"

It was so evident that his companions were enjoying this novel incident, that Mr. Cox would not deprive them of the pleasure of Joss's further communications.

"Jarvis o' Brough, thee's collier, gaffer; him's poor!" said Joss, who then went on to describe how Jarvis had got hurt in one of the pits and had never recovered from the injury; how his delicate wife was hard put to to get a living for all their seven little children; and finally how they were obliged to leave their house because it had been denounced as not only unsafe for them but dangerous to others and necessary to be pulled down.

Mr. Cox said he thought their being turned out of a house that was falling over their heads was no great hardship. Joss replied readily that the hardship was they had no other to go

into, for people did not like to take in such a large family with such very slender and uncertain means.

"And what is to be done; what am I asked to do?" inquired Mr. Cox.

"Wilt gi'n a house?" Joss promptly answered, adding, "there be four as was built on the Common (by thee's father, they say, for poor pitmen as is hard put to for livin' —as is about wore out wi' work an' that; sha't ha' one o' them? That be the business as brought me here."

Mr. Cox, who had not owned the Brough property very long, and who had placed its entire management in the hands of an agent, had never seen the place except once, when he had taken much interest and pleasure in noticing the men.

He answered, "My good friend Joss, I am not the proper person to apply to; Mr. Robson, who manages the concern, is always somewhere there, and he knows all about the matter; you should ask him."

"Him, gaffer!" exclaimed Joss, pleadingly, "Thee's name is on the carts; thee's we's gaffer."

"But you see," said Mr. Cox, touched by this simple, earnest appeal, "I know nothing of the rules as to the giving of these houses, nor what really forms a just claim to them, and

so on; now Mr. Robson is up in the whole thing."

Joss knew well enough that Mr. Robson had his own favourites to provide for, and that he had already intimated his intention of giving the vacant house to one who, as everybody there knew well, wanted it and deserved it far less than poor Jarvis did.

But he had not come to see his proper gaffer to complain of his substitute; it was not in his way to find fault with the absent, so passing over Robson's name as a thing quite irrelevant, he said, "Hopes as thee'lt gie't to poor Jarvis!" and he looked so wistfully as he spoke, that there was no resisting him; the gentlemen around the table, who had listened with great pleasure to his disinterested, forcible pleading, joined in a little murmur of sympathy. And Mr. Cox was evidently overcome.

"I really don't like to interfere with Robson; what shall I do?" he said, turning to his friend Mr. Jones, a lawyer.

"Give him a note to Robson, saying you wish the man to have the house if the case is a worthy one; that, of course, will settle it," said the lawyer.

Joss looked dissatisfied with this advice; he thought, as Sonsie Bill had said of him, that the gentleman didn't "see to the fur end o' the matter." After a moment's hesitation,

Signed and Settled.

seeing that Mr. Cox was preparing to write, he said earnestly, "Straight's the way, gaffer; not through Baily Robson, but fro' thee to Jarvis. Hooks and crooks never comes to no good; just do thee put on the paper as Jarvis, broke in health an' spirit through his bad hurt in the pit, shall ha' the house as old Berry died in a month gone by; an 'll take thee's order straight back to Brough, an' set all thee's men a blessin' o' thee, for all o'n makes a brother like o' poor Jarvis!"

"It will come to the same thing," suggested the lawyer, who from his habits of observation had augured from Joss's most expressive countenance that the steward was no favourite with him, an augury not, in his judgment, to Robson's credit. A few undertone remarks between him and Mr. Cox followed, at the close of which the latter wrote an order to the effect that Titus Jarvis should take immediate possession of the free cottage lately occupied by old Berry. This was signed in due form, Hamilton Cox.

Joss's hand shook with joy as he received it; involuntarily he looked upward, and his heart thanked his Father in heaven.

There was a hum of pleasure among the guests, and purses were brought out, and a subscription was raised for the help of poor Jarvis and his family.

Joss at first refused to take money: he said the gaffer's pay was good; and none of his hands, unless in a case of injury or sickness, needed to want. He and his mates had already clubbed together for Jarvis, and they meant to go on till he got better, if such were God's will concerning him.

But the sum gathered was sealed up, and Mr. Cox told him he must take it. So he thrust it into his pocket. How or where to carry the Honourable's order he could not think. He could not bear to crease it by folding, and without folding how could he carry it? He stood with it in his hand gazing with mingled admiration and perplexity. His difficulty was at an end when a large envelope was produced, and thus protected he secured it under his slop.

"Well, is there any more business on hand?" Mr. Cox inquired with a smile.

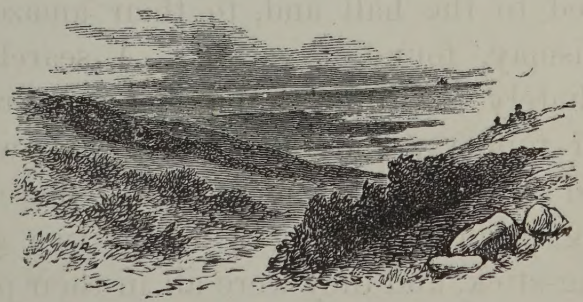
Joss smiled too, with gratitude that heightened the beauty of his manly face. "If thee'lt come to Brough," he said, "thee shalt ha' such a welcome as thee won't forget; wish as theed'st come, good gaffer; but if canna ha' thee, we mun ax hearty for thee—an' it's clear case to we, as our Father who art in heaven do hear when we ax, an' do answer when He hears, bless His holy name!"

The solemnity and fervour with which he

spoke bore testimony, not only to his sincerity, but to the fact that it was the language of experience.

Joss was by no means given to talking; he was slow rather than not in utterance; and to tell out the secret convictions and workings of his heart was by no means his ordinary practice. But his circumstances now were peculiar; he had been wonderfully uplifted by the manifest answers he had received to prayer, and the success which he was certain had come straight down from his Father in heaven, he was bound to ascribe to Him.

He made a good impression on his auditory; there could be no doubt his piety was genuine. Mr. Cox resolved, then and there, that, as soon as the business he had in hand was finished, he would go to Brough and see this fine band of brothers who showed their fealty to their gaffer by praying for him.



CHAPTER IV.

Joss Returns Home.

WHILE all this was going on upstairs, there was a great commotion in the servants' hall.

What had become of the rogue and ruffian? Joss had scarcely reached the door where he so happily found Mr. Cox and his friends, when the porter, accompanied by a sufficient force, had returned to the hall and, to their amazement and dismay, found it vacant. A search was immediately instituted to discover if there had been a robbery, and the terrible fellow had escaped with his plunder. But there was nothing portable, saving a hat or two and a walking-stick, and they were all in their proper places.

For some time they debated on the question

of how he could have made his exit so quietly as to escape unheard. A page, meantime, going to the staircase, saw marks of footsteps large and dirty, altogether out of keeping with the company suffered to mount that elegant ascent.

"Surely the man has not dared to go upstairs!" he exclaimed.

"He'd dare anything and anybody," said the porter surlily.

"Hush!" said the page; "I hear——" and with that, he skipped like a young roe up the stairs, and being immediately attracted to the half-open door, went as close as he could without fear of discovery and listened attentively to all that went on. He took care to be on the bottom mat in the hall before Joss had begun to descend; but he had heard nearly the whole of what had passed, and was heartily delighted with the rogue and ruffian, and ready to give him a cordial salute when he was safe landed in the hall.

Mr. Cox had ordered that Joss should have refreshment before leaving, but he was too full of joy to think of eating or of anything but getting back to poor Jarvis.

"He's a real good fellow," said the page, earnestly, to those in the hall. "I hope if master goes to Brough he'll take me with him."

His face turned towards him with a bright smile caught Joss's eye, he laid his rough black hand on his head, and, his heart overflowing with loving-kindness, he blessed him like an old father, and charged him to do his best by his gaffer—"Honourable, er means!" he added, nodding towards upstairs.

The force that had assembled to expel him he did not notice, but passed towards the door which the porter, much surprised at the close the affair had taken, unfastened and held open; he turned and gave one nod to the whole party, and then went down the steps into the square. To his great satisfaction, he saw his old friend the cabman, who, suspecting he would not remain long with the Honourable, had loitered near the house for him, after having carried another fare to some trifling distance.

"To the station?" asked cabby.

"Ay, sure!" answered Joss, joyfully.

"Did you do your job?" asked the man, pretty sure from appearances of a satisfactory answer.

Joss nodded and putting the fare with a handsome addition into his hand, said, "Thee'lt not likely see me again; here, wilt have this?" shaking the cloak which he still wore.

"Have that?" asked the cabman, much surprised.

"Ay, thee saidst thee often catched rheumatics through driving about in cold wet nights an' waiting at one place an' another; this'll keep thee warm, an' it's no good to me now."

This was perfectly true; the cloak, like its owner, had fulfilled its mission and henceforth became an incumbrance. Joss couldn't think what he should do with it if he met by chance any he knew at the train; he must certainly give it to some one by the way, and here was a man who, poor, exposed to all weathers, and having a large family to support, seemed to be the proper person to have it. It was an ease to his heart to give it to him, especially when the cabman said,

"Thank God for meeting with you! It'll be the saving of me, I believe, this winter."

"Ah, thank God; thank thee's Father which art in heaven, Him as has helped me through my work. Mind thee, all as is good comes down to we," pointing to the sky as he spoke. "When thee dost put it on, say as that were the way it came."

Joss's first work when he got to Brough was to go to Jarvis's cottage. He was sitting, looking very pale and dejected, by a small fire, with several little children playing around. His face brightened as he saw his friend. He told him how lonely he felt, but that Sonsie

Bill had come to him and brought him some supper, and one or two others had looked in.

Joss, hardly knowing where to begin, first pulled out the sealed money parcel and put it into his hand. Jarvis rolled it round and round and stared at him for an explanation.

"Nay, but open't!" cried Joss. At that minute his wife, who had been gathering sticks, came in, and he turned to her, crying, "Come thee and see what him's afraid to look at!"

She advanced, took the parcel, and quickly exhibited the contents. Neither she nor her husband could speak; they gazed at Joss in wonder; and when he told them some friends had given it to him for them, their joy overcame them.

Jarvis, who was a truly pious man, pointed to his leg, and said with emotion, "Canna kneel, brother, canna kneel; but do thee kneel, and thee, wife, and praise the Lord!"

Joss promptly obeyed the call, and joined the poor woman in her hearty amen to her husband's thanksgiving.

"That be right!" he cried, rising from his knees; "an' now thee'st a bigger benefit to thank the Lord for," and he proceeded to tell them that the Honourable Cox had given a written order for them to go into old Berry's house immediately. He took as he spoke the

envelope from under his slop, assuring them that the Honourable's word that they were to have the house was written inside. "An' thee'lt be hearty in axing for a blessing on Honourable? Sure thee wilt!"

They would have asked many questions, but Joss had much to do. He had been, he had prospered, and he had come back to make their hearts glad in a marvellous manner; and now he must go to Gaffer Grey and tell him how his prayers had been heard and answered, and put the Honourable's order into his hands that it might be duly served and carried out; finally, he must go to work, for he had made a considerable dip into his savings, and as he looked to a not distant day when he should have to provide a home for a wife, he could not afford idleness even if it had not been his abhorrence.

Mr. Grey saw his success written on his face, and hailed him with a cordial welcome; he happened to be just leaving his house, but returned, taking Joss with him.

Now the poor fellow was able to tell his story fully; and how gladly his good teacher listened to his simple hearty testimony to answered prayer may easily be believed.

Again Joss knelt, while Mr. Grey solemnly and earnestly returned thanks for the mercies he had received; and prayed that what he had

experienced might, by God's further blessing, increase his faith and hope and love!

Mr. Grey gladly took charge of the notice, which he saw was quite clear and positive, and promised that Mr. Robson should have it, adding that there was no fear but that Jarvis and his family would be comfortably housed on the Common immediately.

Again Joss wrung the Scripture-reader's hand, and again he cried out to him to leave him some whole bones.

By the time Joss reached the Common, the men were at dinner; he found them precisely in the same circumstances, only a little lower down on the road in which we introduced the reader to them at first.

"Heh! be'st back? Where'st bin?" cried Sonsie Bill, starting up when he saw him.

"Bin to far end, an' come back!" said Joss, laughing.

"Bin a seein' o' Liz?" was the next question. "Thought thee was gone to Jarvis, but er said er hadn't sin 'ee!"

"How's tramway?" asked Joss, laying himself on the turf and looking to the road to divert the conversation.

"Sick o't," cried Sonsie in disgust; "soon's pit's clear, I'll be back to the right work; an' thee?" he added, with a questioning look.

Joss agreed with him very decidedly on the superiority of pit-work over that they were now temporarily engaged in—not that it mattered much to him what work he had to do, but he had conceived, very naturally, so strong a feeling for Mr. Cox, that he felt it was scarcely right in him to work for another.

It was a very different thing to him now, that name; he had always held it in mysterious reverence when he had seen it on the coal-carts; but since the man himself, the name in person, had looked on him and spoken to him, so kindly and so graciously, it was a living love he had to him.

At the next cottage-lecture held by Mr. Grey, he spoke much of the power of prayer, and of the folly of being careful and troubled about the things we are concerned with, since all our wants are well known to our Father, whose ear is ever ready to listen to the poorest and weakest of His children, and whose throne of grace is open to all comers; "and the way to it is direct, straight up," he said, pointing above: "Our Father, which art in heaven, hear us, through Jesus Christ our Lord! That's the way to pray."

SALUTING THE COLOURS.

CHAPTER I.

Marvellous News.

ELL to be sure!—It's a wonderful story altogether. Seven priests, only seven! If it had been seventy, or seven hundred, one might have understood it better, but seven!

"And 'rams' horns' too, not silver trumpets; and they always used silver trumpets on great days; no, nothing but rams' horns, carried by seven priests! And yet the walls of Jericho came down; this poor show was too much for them!

"I see it plain enough, God's way will always be the right way. He can work by many or few; by weak or strong; what's the

difference between 'hard and easy' in His sight? He is Jehovah—God over all! Shame to me if I don't go straight at my work after this!" said Richard Waterlock as he rose from his seat, reverently closing his Bible, full of high and holy thoughts and strong resolve.

"Heh, Dick! I thought as you'd have been gone off to work long ago," said an old man, whose white hair fell over his shoulders, setting off well a comely face and complexion.

"Then what made you come?" asked Richard, with a laugh.

"Ay; a proper question! Well, it was 'hoping against hope' made me come. I says to myself, if he's at work (as I guess he is), I

will just go in and wait till he comes back to dinner. I know I shall be welcome, whether he's at home or out."

"Welcome enough to 'come' but still more welcome to 'go' in a few minutes," said Richard, good-humouredly; "do you see what the clock says?" And he pointed to a very old varnished clock that clicked in the corner.

"Yes—plain enough—it's only an hour off your dinner-time, and sure you won't start till dinner's over? and so by that means, you and I can have a bit together."

"It's in this way, Stevie; I was ordered to keep in till this time, waiting for some one to call, but as the time is up, I won't stay any longer," said Richard, laughing and reaching his hat.

"Oh, but you will though," said Stevie. "Haven't I come all this way in a sun strong enough to brile a good tough steak, on purpose to tell you summat as consarns us both very much, and d'ye think I'll let you off without a word? No! not if I knows it, Dicky."

"Nonsense," said Richard, making for the door, against which the old man, seeing his movement, immediately planted himself.

"Now don't—don't make me uncivil in my own quarters," he cried, as he proceeded to take the intruder by the waist in order to effect his removal.

Stevie, with great calmness, slid down and sat on the ground, resting his back on the door. He held up his hand in a deprecating manner, seeing that there was a cloud gathering on the brow of his unwilling host.

"Now, Dick, hearken to me," he said. "I got summat to tell you as'll make your hair stiver up with astonishment; it's more than you've counted on, and more than I ever counted on, I can assure you."

Richard, knowing the imperturbable character of the old man, stood over him, irresolute, but very much provoked by his behaviour.

"That's right, take it quiet, Dicky," said Stevie, fumbling in his waistcoat pocket while he kept his eyes fixed on Richard.

He soon brought out a short pipe and his lighting apparatus, and having deliberately kindled the pipe, said in a very oracular tone, "Sketchnook is to be sold!" adding, "what d'ye think of that?"

"Sketchnook!—Sold!" exclaimed Richard.

"Ay, sold. Now, warn't that worth stopping to hear?" asked Stevie, taking a whiff of his pipe.

"It's not true; it can't be true!" said Richard much startled.

"May be not; but whether it can or it can't, it is true, as sure as your name is Dick

Waterlock and mine is Stevie Treadles," was the answer.

"But Squire Auld—!" exclaimed Richard.

"Hah—" said Stevie, pressing the tobacco down into his pipe calmly; "that's the awk'ardest part of it. Squire's broke—clean broke."

"Broke," shouted Richard.

"Broke," repeated Stevie with impressive quietness, as he took another whiff.

"Get up, man, and tell out all you've got to say; don't go smothering such things in 'bacca smoke: where did you hear this? who told you?"

"Wildbrook had his pocket full of notices; printed notices, you mind, and he was a-sticking of 'em up on every post and pillar he come to," said Stevie, unmoved by Dick's excited tone.

He then went on to tell that Wildbrook, and Sparks of the "Pig and Fiddle," and Cross the blacksmith, and several others had "told about" as the squire had got into trouble and gone smash by reason of it.

"Rubbish!" exclaimed Richard with a mixture of displeasure and contempt. "Do you think that if 'twas true—any of it—I shouldn't have heard such news as that sooner than you, when I am, as you may say, belonging to the squire?"

"It's hard to believe what one doesn't like to be true; however, you take my word for it, squire won't be squire, to you, nor to Sam Mealin, nor even to Mr. Charles—nor to nobody—no longer," said Stevie; "he never were much to *me* noways; I didn't please him, may be; he were a very proud, hasty man, and I warn't of that humble kind as he liked; he never put me on work after that trouble about the parliament voting, and why shouldn't I go and vote according to my conscience? It's just this, Dicky, 'Pride must have a fall,' and the more pride the greater the fall; by reason of which, squire's fall is found to be a great one; and, for all I wouldn't hurt your feelings, knowing how you look to him though he behaved so bad to you, I can't help saying '*serve him right.*'"

"There — that's enough," said Richard somewhat sternly; "you know as well as I do that it was not your voting, but your—well—I won't rake up old dirt; if you don't know what it was that lost you his favour, you're about the only man in Sketchnook manor that is so short of knowledge; but I can't stay here, talking loose like this about a thing of such consequence. Where did Sparks and the rest get the story?"

"That's more than I know," said Stevie, rather crestfallen.

"And what did the notice say?" asked Richard.

"All about it, as I suppose," said Stevie.

"As you suppose! then you don't know? you haven't read the notice?"

"No; by reason I haven't seed one," said Stevie, getting uncomfortable; "howsomever, I'm sure it's all true; and I thought as you wouldn't be loth to believe it after squire's hardness on you, for all you belongs to him."

"Waterlock—Waterlock!" cried a voice from without, and the door was shaken somewhat roughly, much to the discomposure of Stevie, who with an injured air began slowly to rise; before he had had time to move from the door it was pushed open, and Mr. Charles, Squire Auld's confidential servant, appeared.

"Waterlock," he cried, not noticing Treadles, who stood on one side, "I'm glad you have kept in, you must come up with me to the Hall. I should have been here before, but I have been so hindered;" and he turned from the door.

Richard was struck with the hurry apparent in his manner; he nodded to Stevie and followed him, leaving his house in possession of the old man, who peeped out after them, and watched them as they crossed the common on which the cottage stood.

"Now he's a-getting of it!" he cried, seeing them halt and stand in what seemed to be earnest conversation. "He'll believe Mr. Charles, I'll warrant him, but he wouldn't believe me; and why not? I'm as good as Mr. Charles any day, and a deal better to my thoughts, only Dicky has got such a wonderful great opinion of all that family, from the squire down to the very poorest servant in the place, that he can't give a thought to any body, them being in the way! It's a great pity, for Dick's a sensible man enough in most things, and very kind-hearted. I'm sure he'd give me a bit of 'bacca if he knowed as mine was gone, that he would!"

Here, after a moment's hesitation, he put his empty pipe into his pocket, and went to the corner cupboard, which, like the house door, had a free-and-easy lock, and filled his pipe from the box which he soon found, putting an additional pinch into paper, that it might last him till he reached home.

"I'm sure I'm welcome to it," he said, as if to satisfy his conscience, as he put the canister very carefully into the corner in which he found it, and arranged all the things he had moved in hunting for it, in their proper order.

"Poor Dicky! he's real good-natured—

only for his foolish way about squire and his folks, I don't know a fault he's got; and squire so hard on him too!"

With a look round to see if there was any other improvement he could make in his circumstances at "good-natured Dicky's" expense, he at length departed, making the door as secure as he could. "Good thing as there ain't nothing worth taking!" he remarked as he turned towards his own quarters, calculating that as his friend had been fetched to the Hall so near to dinner-time, he would be sure to get his dinner there, so there would be no use in his waiting for his return to have a bit with him, while his story of the sale of Sketchnook and the squire's troubles was confirmed.

Mr. Charles and Richard were out of sight when he left the house; he debated with himself whether he should return to his solitary cottage, where he knew he should find neither dinner nor fire, or pay a visit to the "Pig and Whistle," where he might light on some one good-natured enough to treat him. He decided on making this experiment, so, changing his course, he made for the road-side, and was very soon seated in the porch of the inn.

CHAPTER II.

Sketchnook Hall and the Troubles there.

SQUIRE AULD'S private room had a most inviting look-out. It commanded from its square-framed, square-paned window a view of the park. Two rows of fine elms, with a broad gravel walk between them, closed on finely-wrought bronze gates, which displayed as their chief ornament the arms of the Sketchnook family. Through their delicate tracery was visible a broad pool of water, on which stately swans disported themselves; and far beyond were clumps of ornamental timber, well dispersed, the distance being crowned with a noble luxuriant grove.

But this side view was nothing compared with that which was seen from the front. Every device that art could use, to make nature subservient in beautifying the scene,

had been ably employed, so that the fine old mansion stood surrounded by a grace in which it could not be said to share.

It was a "Queen Anne's" house; to say this is to take from it all pretensions to beauty. An extended front, having windows in straight rows all over it, gave it the look of a factory rather than of a manorial dwelling; yet "Sketchnook Hall" was approached with reverential admiration by the people, who, with the implicit faith of old times, held its title to all that was great and grand to be unquestionable.

It owed its existence to a Squire Auld of some generations back, who, finding the old Hall falling into decay, rebuilt it according to the taste of the times, possibly having none of his own to interfere with the work.

The present squire had always believed it to be, what the inhabitants of Sketchnook to a man asserted, a fit representative of the family dignity, and he never passed through its beautiful gates without a feeling of quiet complacency that he was the Squire of Sketchnook, and a descendant from a long line of ancestors who had been born and lived, and had died (most of them) on the spot where the edifice stood.

He had been born there, and he had lived there—but was he to die there? He did not

want to think about dying, either there or elsewhere, still as dying was inevitable, the thought of his last hours being passed in any other place was scarcely endurable.

Such a thought was violently agitating him as he walked up and down that private room we have spoken of; his arms were crossed behind his back, his head now nervously turning to the windows, to see if any were coming up the side avenue, and now towards the old clock that graced the centre of the chimney-piece.

"I wonder Kemeys hasn't been to me, he must have heard of it," he exclaimed; "but he may be away, or——"

Other suggestions were stopped by a sharp rap at the door, and a tall noble figure, with a face worthy of it, entered the room.

"Ah, general!" exclaimed the squire, extending his hands.

"Ah, squire!" echoed the general, grasping them warmly in his.

"Ah, my friend!" cried the squire; "I little thought it would ever come to this."

"What would come to what?" asked the general, passing his fingers through the crisp grey curls that covered his massive head.

"Then you haven't heard?" asked the squire, looking surprised.

"About Brooks, do you mean? ah, yes,

I heard old Treadles chattering something I couldn't make out; he's dead, isn't he? or ruined, which?" The general asked the question in a tone which showed little interest in the answer, the said Brooks being a stranger to him.

"Both!" gasped the squire; "and he has dragged others after him?"

"Not you," cried the general, laughing; "you are a living man?"

"Yes, but a ruined man," said the squire with strong emotion; "I fear so!"

"Nonsense!" shouted the general, drawing himself up from the stooping posture in which he was sitting to an erect one, and looking at his friend for explanation.

"I am a ruined man," repeated the squire; "I must leave this 'home of my fathers,' driven out of it by fraud and villainy."

"Look here," said the general; "speak plain, that's a good fellow. I don't understand you when you're on the high ropes; do you mean to say that you must leave Sketchnook!"

"I do!" said the squire, despairingly.

"Humph!" cried the general, looking round the room as he sat; "I can't take that in; what's up? what has Brooks's dying got to do with you?"

"Everything," cried the squire; "you

know he was supposed to have immense riches —immense—but it turns out that he has died insolvent."

The general gave a long low whistle, his usual mode of expressing great surprise.

"Unhappily, I trusted him implicitly," added the squire, "and here—see what I received this morning!" taking a letter from his pocket.

"Can't make head or tail of it," said the general, throwing it on the sofa after glancing it over. "Does the fellow mean to say that your title-deeds are lost?"

"He says that owing to the unhappy state in which Brooks's affairs are left, he is afraid they are irrecoverable, and that I am responsible to the creditors of the firm to an amount he cannot yet state—don't you see?" taking up the letter.

"See!" cried the general in much disgust. "I see nothing but pothooks and hangers in that thing; have you seen the fellow that wrote it?"

"What, the commissioner?" asked the squire.

"The fellow that sent this," cried the general, slapping the letter with his hunting whip.

"Seen him? No—what would be the use?" asked the squire.

"Use! why, make him tell out in plain English what he means, of course. If I had a manor like yours, and a fellow laid his finger on it, I'd soon know the reason why."

The squire did not answer, but he looked perplexed.

"Now for facts," said the general. "Have you borrowed money from Brooks?"

"No," said the squire.

"Have you signed any of his—I don't know what they call them—but things to hook you into his affairs?"

"I have never, to my remembrance, signed any thing of any kind, but receipt for rents," said the squire.

"How came he to get hold of your title-deeds?" asked the general.

"He wanted to look them over, he said, to be sure that they were all right; and then he advised me to let him keep them in his safe," said the squire.

"Ha ha! Well, it's done! the next thing is to undo; you must go to them," cried the general.

"Go? where?" said the squire, with a timid, bewildered look.

"To these fellows," cried the general, starting up and tapping the letter with his whip. "Come at once; I'll go with you; and know the worst or get the best. And if

we've any luck we'll bring the title-deeds back with us. How can any one else claim Sketchnook?"

The squire clasped his hands behind his back and shook his head.

"Not go?" exclaimed the general, after much fruitless expostulation. "Then Crusoe and I will go; come along, old boy!" he cried to a huge black retriever that had lain quietly under the table ever since his master had brought him in. "Where does the fellow live; and what's his name?" picking up the letter to ascertain those facts for himself.

He frowned over the crumpled paper which he had so roughly handled, and having declared that lawyers ought to pay clients well for reading their letters, seized his military cap, and clapping the squire on the shoulder, told him to cheer up, it would all come right.

"I wish it may, my dear general; but I confess I have no—that is, very little—hope!"

"Well, if the worst comes to the worst, you must salute the colours; we all get a counter-march that we don't like, some time or other; then there's nothing for it but submission!"

As he spoke his face flushed and trembled; it was momentary; he just stooped and patted Crusoe, and quickly rose with his usual dauntless expression.

Opening the door to leave, he found Mr. Charles standing by it. "Here's Corporal Charles," he cried; "looking as solemn as if he'd lost a battle; what's the matter, man?"

Mr. Charles smiled spasmodically as the general passed him, waving his cap to the squire and whistling to Crusoe.

His firm tread and his cheery musical whistle loudly proclaimed him descending the stairs; and, as he was crossing the hall,

"Sam, the general's horse!" shouted Mrs. Bonny, the housekeeper, hastily and deferentially greeting him.

"I hope Mealin won't keep you waiting, sir; but we are all in such confusion on account of squire's trouble, that it's a chance if he's in the way, or any one else; he seldom is, except when he'd better be out of it," she added.

"I thought Mealin was your head man!" said the general, laughing.

"Sam Mealin, sir!" she answered, "why, sir, this very morning he's been and shook the best tree instead of hand-picking the plums for preserving; no, sir, he's no man of mine; better if he'd never been the squire's, but it's the lazy ways that's the ruin of them all, as I tell Mr. Charles; there isn't one fit for another place, if it comes that the squire does give up."

"Oh, I hope it won't come to that," said

the general, looking critically at his horse as Sam brought it up to the Hall door, and pointing with his whip to some defect in the grooming. Then, mounting, he nodded a farewell to the housekeeper, and rode off.

But Mrs. Bonny had not done with him. "Sam," she cried, as Mealin was following the general; "go you and look up all the eggs, I'm sure you haven't brought 'em half in. I'll let the general through."

Sam was not sorry; he had not felt easy under the general's look at him after his scrutiny of his horse, and he was half afraid of getting a lecture at the gate; short he knew it would be, but he was equally sure it would be sharp.

"Wish folks wouldn't be so partikler," he thought; "why if squire's horse was brought out to him stuck all over with straws, he'd never notice it. Poor squire! I hope as it isn't true about his troubles!"

Mrs. Bonny was out of breath as she came up to the general, who was waiting at the yard gate looking impatiently for Mealin, and on the point of dismounting and rattling the door open for himself.

"Oh, sir," she cried, panting; "I hope you'll excuse the liberty, but I wanted so much to ask you if it's as bad with the squire as he thinks it is?"

"I hope not," said the general; "but at present I know no more than you do; keep that fellow up to his work, and make him pick his plums! Good morning!"

"Oh, sir—please—beg pardon!" she cried breathlessly as he reined in his horse and looked down at her; "but I was going to say, I hope as you won't think very badly of Sam for what I told you; I'll own to his laziness (and so will he); but he's real good-natured, and if he was just kept to work he'd be a good servant; I wouldn't let my words be in the way of his getting a place if—" here she looked her meaning—"if the Hall is broken up."

The general, with his usual good-humoured laugh, said, "Don't be afraid. I won't tell—even the crows!" pointing to a cloud of rooks returning to their home from a morning excursion.

Mrs. Bonny watched him with admiration as he rode off with equal ease, grace, and rapidity. "Now don't he look for all the world as if he was at the head of his soldiers?" she said to herself; "how glad I am that he's been to the squire; if anybody can help him he can—and sure if any one will, he will!"

The general, unconscious of the tribute thus rendered to him, slackened his pace when he

had gone a little distance. He began to think over what he had undertaken to do. No less a work than to get the title-deeds of Sketchnook out of the hands of parties whose interest it most probably was to keep them; the "parties" in addition being lawyers!

More and more slowly he rode, as he took the thing of pothooks and hangers from his pocket, and tried to get at its true meaning. He shook his head impatiently as he crushed it up and returned it to its place.

"Nothing gained by calling names," he muttered; "or I should tell you, John Kemeys, that you were a fool to volunteer to lead such a forlorn hope."

He had scarcely finished his soliloquy when his attention was drawn to the hedge-bank by Crusoe, who rushed up it with great vivacity.

"What have you got? a rat or a rabbit?" he cried, following the course which the dog had taken; when he saw, stretched at his full length, hidden at a little distance by the irregularities of the turf and clustering hedge, his good friend Frank Isaac Ashberry, his elbows buried in the turf and his head resting on his hands.

Crusoe's vigorous salute had sent the book on which his eyes had been fixed, down into the ditch below, to the general's great amusement.

"Never in greater need of a reinforcement," he cried, getting off his horse with evident delight; "now for a council of war!"

In a moment's time he was up the bank and seated by his astonished friend.

"Let me pick up my book!" cried the latter, when he had a little recovered his presence of mind.

"Tut," cried the general; "Crusoe can do that!" and by means of words and signs which Crusoe perfectly understood, the book was soon in its master's hands.

The general quickly made his friend "master of the position."

"And now," he cried, "look at this!" and he produced the crumpled letter.

"It smells of gunpowder!" said Mr. Ashberry, quietly unfolding and smoothing it.

"What could you expect, coming from a lawyer!" cried the general.

"Nay! rather ask, what could I expect, coming from a soldier?" answered his friend.

"I put it in the wrong pocket," said the general, laughing; "I forgot my flask was there; never mind; but don't call me 'a soldier,' I haven't made war on any thing but partridges for years; I have forgotten how to fight." A shade of melancholy passed over his face as he spoke.

"Blessed times when they shall learn war no more; but the Prince of Peace shall reign and rule in love!" said Mr. Ashberry.

"Ah, Isaac!" cried the general; "I wish I knew more about these things; if I had been brought up as you were, and had followed up my drill, I should have been a happier man now."

"Ah, John," said Mr. Ashberry, calmly. "There is but one road to happiness—Jesus Christ—He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!"

The general involuntarily moved his cap at these words.

"The Lord has different training for each of His children; you were to learn discipline, being by nature somewhat unruly, so you were made a soldier; I being of the quiet dullard kind, have had other teaching; never mind the way we are led, John, if we gain the end."

The general looked for a moment at the calm peaceful face before him; several answers rose to his lips, but he did not pursue the subject.

"About this?" he cried, pointing to the letter.

"I will go with you," said Mr. Ashberry, "to the executors and assignees of Brooks; I can't see now how the matter lies, but although I

don't know them at all, I believe that they are honourable men, and I hope there will be no disastrous event for your friend."

"Right," cried the general, starting up; "and we'll go at once; I know nothing of them, Brooks I never saw; it's not far into the town; I'll lead the mare; Crusoe, fetch her!" Here he pointed to the mare which was quietly grazing at a little distance down the road, and returned to her master directly, in obedience to Crusoe's summons.

"You have your forces in admirable order and control," said Mr. Ashberry, with a smile.

"Oh yes, they all know the word of command," replied the general, patting Crusoe, and stroking the mare as he slung the bridle over his arm.

The walk into the town was beguiled by very interesting talk, which had the effect of giving to the general's face some of the peaceful expression that made his companion's so pleasant to look upon. "Here we are!" he cried, quite cheerily, as they stood before the house; "I couldn't have believed it possible I should enjoy a walk to a lawyer's office."

CHAPTER III.

How Jericho came down.

On the road from Waterlock's cottage to the Hall, Mr. Charles had told him as much as he thought it expedient to trust him with of the future that seemed to threaten Sketchnook and its master.

Mr. Charles was eminently long-headed; he never was caught committing himself. Very searching in his strictures on others, he was most cautious not to lay himself open to blame. Most probably he knew that much mercy would not be extended to him if he were caught tripping.

Nobody liked him; but nobody said so out loud, except Stevie Treadles; who comforted himself under all the troubles he suffered from

the squire's rejection of him, by the confidence with which he looked for the disgraceful finding out of the enemy to whom he traced all his misadventures, namely, "Mr. Charles."

The squire was wrapped up in him; he had gradually become his second self. He could not plan anything, nor do anything without his advice, which was always sound and useful where it suited Mr. Charles's purpose. But there was only one person to whose interest Mr. Charles was honestly devoted: that person was himself.

If Sketchnook must have another master (it was a very unpleasant view to take of the matter, but if the correct one, he must shape his course accordingly), so must he. A small, but most desirable holding in the property, had won his heart; he had hoped the time was not far off when the squire would give him possession of it on terms which would almost make it a gift. But what had happened to knock that hope on the head, unless he could so far ingratiate himself with the new squire—whoever he might be—as to carry out his scheme. He was quite sure that he could manage to make his master recommend him too strongly to his successor for him to be rejected: and he had no fear of being able to make himself as necessary as he now was to Mr. Auld, to any one that might follow him.

All this was coolly settled in Mr. Charles's head. He thought it perfectly just and reasonable that he should do the best for himself; he saw no ingratitude in the selfish indifference with which he viewed his present master's troubles. Banks would break, and lawyers would be dishonest; and if people *would* trust banks and lawyers, they must abide by the consequences.

To see his face and to hear his voice, an ordinary spectator would have thought he was suffering severely on the squire's behalf; but those who were able to see at all into his character, strongly suspected that he was fretting for the cloud that had come over his own prospects.

While he went to announce to his master that Waterlock was waiting his orders, he put Richard in the housekeeper's room, whispering as he left him that he must be cautious of what he said. "You will give Richard some dinner," he said in as magisterial a tone as he ever dared to use to the housekeeper; "he has lost his own by coming so early."

Mrs. Bonny was busy preserving the plums, but not too busy to be glad to see Richard, who was a great favourite at the Hall.

"Oh, don't you trouble; I'll see to him," she answered, with a careless, defiant nod. "Bad times coming, I'm afraid," she said, as

she placed Richard's dinner before him. "If it's all true, I'm afraid poor squire won't have many more dinners to give away—more's the pity!"

Just as she had thus opened the subject which, of course, then occupied the minds of all, she heard the general's whistle as he came down the stairs from the squire's room, and rushed out into the hall to see, as she said, to his getting his horse, being sure that Sam would not appear unless summoned in earnest. During her absence Waterlock finished his meal, and was ready for his expected call from Mr. Charles.

"Oh, eat a bit more, Dick," said Mrs. Bonny when she returned, in a tone that showed her spirits had improved in her absence. "There's plenty of time; he's not finished his yarn by a good deal, be sure,"—here she nodded to Mr. Charles's hat which he had thrown on the table. "I do wonder the squire isn't tired to death of him," she added. Finding that Waterlock made no response to her attack on the hat and its owner, she made a fresh dive into the plum-basket, and, showing some of the fruit, asked if any one couldn't see that they hadn't been hand-picked. "But as to getting anything done by Sam Mealin, it's beyond me. He won't do a thing—only for him," again nodding at the hat. "You'd

think as he was squire, ordering this way and that way. There isn't a servant in the whole lot here that he doesn't 'master' it with. As to Sam, he keeps him working up at 'Green Briars'—where, you know, he's looking to go some day—till his work here is left to any one that'll do it. And nobody will—so it's never done!"

Richard only smiled. He did not want to enter on the merits of the case.

"He's the real master, Richard, that's it; and his waste and extravagance" (another nod at the hat)—"Oh, I wouldn't have to answer for him! . . . No!"

"Sorry to answer for anybody but myself; that'll be enough for anyone to do, I reckon; too much if there isn't some one to answer for him."

"Ah, yes; I know what you mean, Richard, and that's true; and I believe you mean it because you are a good, religious man; but as to him" (here the hat got a most vigorous and vicious nod)—"I'm sure there's no more religion in him than in——"

Perhaps Mrs. Bonny was discouraged by Richard's way of receiving her criticisms on Mr. Charles; certain it was that she finished her speech by looking at the plate of bruised plums in her hand, as if she were going to cite them as fellow-culprits with him whom she so unsparingly condemned

"It doesn't do to be hard on folks," said Richard, mildly. "There's faults to be seen all about; but it seems to me to be best to look at home and mind our own goings. I find that's as much as I can manage, and I dare say you do too."

"Oh, Richard, I'm not so good as I ought to be; I wish I could say I was," said Mrs. Bonny, who felt rebuked, but was not angry. "I'm not like him" (a nod at the hat). "If you could only see him at church, right beside squire, stand up when they sing that hymn:

> 'Who know what's right, not only so,
> But always practise what they know!'

you'd feel just what I do, I'm sure. He looks for all the world as if he was telling everybody 'That's me!'"

Richard laughed.

"Oh, don't laugh, Dick. He makes me so mad, I could throw my hymn-book at him!" she said.

"Oh fie, fie!" he answered. "I'm sure if that's it, you haven't the good opinion of yourself to be able to say, 'It's me!'"

"Oh no, Richard; I call it wicked conceit to do that, and I hope I have got none of that! But I do my duty, and nobody can say I don't; and that's more than he can say;"

here came her last salute to the hat, which its owner fetched while she was finishing her speech.

"Richard, the squire is ready to see you," said Mr. Charles, opening the door.

"Reach him his hat!" said the housekeeper; "my table isn't the place for it!"

Mr. Charles smiled superciliously as he took his hat from Richard, and said, with a serene face and gentle voice, "Poor woman, she is in a bad way; but I don't wonder; it is not a common mind like hers that can bear reverses!"

Waterlock made no answer, and they reached the squire's room in silence.

He was much struck with the squire's altered appearance and agitated manner. He felt quite grieved, and longed to be able to say a word of comfort; but who was he that he should comfort the master and owner of Sketchnook?

"Reverses will come, Richard," said Mr. Auld, trembling as he spoke; "you have heard of what is threatened?"

"There's many things threatened, squire, as never comes off," said Richard, looking with such tender sympathy into his master's face, that the latter was both touched and soothed.

"True," he said; "but unless right can stand against might, and *justice* can conquer *law*, *this* is a trouble that will not pass off!"

"Well, squire (but you know better a deal than me), right *is* stronger than might. I don't know about law and justice; I suppose they aren't partickler friends; but I know this: that where the *might* is, the *right* is, and so it will come out in the end, for all it looks to go crooked at the beginning."

"Richard is thinking of his own case, sir, when you were displeased with him, until we cleared up his character," said Mr. Charles, who was not satisfied with the squire's condescension to Waterlock, nor with the latter for, as he thought, taking advantage of it.

"*I warn't!*" said Richard, turning somewhat sharply on him. "I was thinking of something of a deal more consequence."

"And what might that be?" asked Mr. Charles, superciliously.

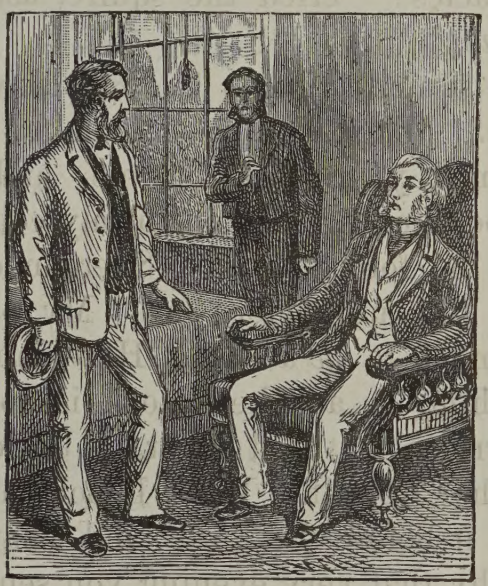
"It was squire I was talking to!" said Richard, quite undaunted (as he always was) by the favourite's assumption of superiority.

"Yes, yes, Richard, it was," said the squire, who hoped the case in question might be one to comfort him; "what were you thinking of?"

"Well, sir, I was a-thinking of that king that came and blustered to good Hezekiah, and threatened to turn him out of house and home; you know how he fared."

"Ah! that's in the Bible!" said the squire, disappointed.

"If 'twasn't there, sir, I shouldn't take notice of it," said Waterlock; "I know that what's there is written for our learning, and by reason of that I always go there when I want to learn the meaning of what's going on, that seems hard to understand."



It was getting far too much for Mr. Charles's patience. He came forward and said to the squire, "I thought, sir, you sent to Waterlock, that you might put him up to the course you wished him to take, if—ahem!"

"I did," said the squire; "but, Richard," he added, turning to him, "as far as I remember that story, God did great things

for Hezekiah—sent an angel to destroy the army, and so on. You know, even if I were a king, and a king favoured by God, I couldn't look for wonders like that: this is not an age of miracles."

"Oh, squire! but believe me it *is!*" said Richard, earnestly. "God has worked a many miracles for me, and He will to the end."

"Miracles?" cried the squire, astonished; "for *you?*"

"Ay, squire, *miracles!* Why now I'll tell you one. When you was so angry with me you turned your back on me, and wanted Wildbrook to turn me out of my cottage that I might be forced to leave Sketchnook, I saw nothing but ruin before me. My poor home was as much to *me* as King Hezekiah's palace was to him, or as Sketchnook is to you. I was born in it, bred in it, I buried father and mother from it. Well, I took my trouble and laid it before the Lord; and what came of it? Why that very evening you sent for me and told me you had been under a mistake about me; that you had found it all out, and I was to be your man again, as before, and Wildbrook shouldn't turn me out."

"Ah——" exclaimed the squire, "I remember!"

"*Yes*, you may thank *me* for that, Richard; I was the angel that helped you in that

strait," said Mr. Charles; "wasn't I, sir?" appealing to the squire.

"There's different sorts of angels," said Richard, drily, and surveying him with a look that made him very uncomfortable. He had always been so firmly seated in his good opinion of himself, his sagacity and adroitness, that he had not doubted he had succeeded in making an ally of Richard, whom he had so misrepresented to his master as nearly to get him banished from Sketchnook. Why? because he had found him hard to bring under the yoke; it had turned out, however, that he saw he should rather lose than gain by his dismissal; and that if his scheme did succeed, his conduct would most probably come to the surface and place him in a very odious light to all honest minds.

So he changed his tactics and *stood his friend!* most discreetly undoing and unsaying what he had said and done, till his master, who was too easy-going to think for himself, and had a personal liking for Richard, was glad to have him cleared from blame, and at once restored him to his favour.

Mr. Charles's penetration read in Richard's look that *he* was not the sort of angel he would wish to pass for; and he heartily wished now that he had not brought him to the squire—he had miscalculated his strength, and had

believed gratitude had made Richard his friend; it was plain such was not the case.

The squire was struck with what had passed, and a momentary question as to what sort of angel Richard classed his favourite under, arose in his mind; but Mr. Charles, who saw the prudence of changing the subject, said, "I have told Richard, sir, of your plan of putting him in at the 'Briars' till a new tenant is appointed."

"*Your* plan, Charles!" answered the squire, somewhat shortly.

"Well, sir; let it be *our* plan!" said Mr. Charles, with a look of fawning deference he seldom assumed.

"Never mind about the 'Briars' now," said the squire. "That will be neither mine nor yours if a new owner comes to Sketchnook." Then turning to Richard, he asked: "Suppose things hadn't fallen out as they did (at that time, you know), would you still have said, 'Right is might'?"

"Hope so," said Richard; "but faith is weak, and I might have failed. Can't say, squire."

"But you would have been satisfied, and waited patiently?" said the squire.

"Ay—at least I'd ought," said Richard. "There's a deal in patient waiting, sir; the walls of Jericho didn't come down till the

seven priests and their rams' horns had gone round the right number of times; you mind that bit of the Bible, squire?"

Seeing that the squire did not respond so heartily as to show that he was up in the subject, Richard, whose heart and mind were full of his morning's reading, went over the narrative most graphically, and greatly interested and impressed him.

"Ah!" he cried; "it would be better if we took the Bible to comfort and teach us in every-day life! but now, in this case, Richard, if I lose Sketchnook, I lose everything—every one knows that!"

"Yes, squire, may be so! Sure He knows it that put you into it; and my faith is He'll keep you in it, if so be it's for your true good and His glory—and somehow our true good and His glory always goes together."

"If I could only feel that, should the worst come!" said the squire, with a sigh.

"So you will, squire; so you will, be sure of it," said Richard, earnestly.

"I have great faith in General Kemeys," said the squire, more to himself than to Richard.

"Joshua were a great general, but it was the captain of the Lord's host as brought the walls of Jericho down; it's there where my faith is," said Richard.

Mr. Charles had retreated to the window, where he stood looking earnestly for some arrival that might break up this, to him, very unpleasant conversation. It was right (in his eyes) that the squire should be familiar with *him;* but that he should condescend to talk about the Bible with a fellow like Waterlock —yes, and let him preach to him too !—this was too much.

The squire's rebuff concerning the "Briars" had shocked him not a little. It had been his constant aim and effort to cure, as much as he could, his master's tendency to confide in those around him, and to keep him, as it were, all to himself. Very amiable, very dependent, and very weak, the poor squire was ready, naturally, to cling to any prop however poor, and clasp any kind hand, however incapable of helping; but Mr. Charles had carefully occupied every opening to his favourable notice, excluding all others. If any one seemed to be advancing too near, he always contrived to get him turned off and exchanged for one more to his purpose, yet without coming to the front and taking the blame. It was thus he had once nearly succeeded in banishing Richard from Sketchnook, as has been described.

That morning, under the influence of the dismay caused by the letter of "pothooks and

hangers," the squire had broken through all barriers, and, to his infinite vexation, had proclaimed his troubles to the whole house, so far as he could; and when he had consented to have Waterlock brought to him to receive orders that, in truth, were entirely for the furthering of Mr. Charles's favourite object, his view had been, not to talk with him about the "Briars," but to pour out his sorrows to him, for Richard was one for whom he had always felt a real liking, believing firmly in his allegiance and honesty, except when for a time evil influences had succeeded in embittering him against him.

"I'm very glad I sent for you, Richard," he said, as Waterlock stood before him, his hat in his hand, while Mr. Charles looked askance at both from the window. "I know you feel for me—and the things you have said are very comforting—very. I wish—I wish I believed and loved the Bible as you do, Richard."

He spoke with the simple earnestness of a little child, and his face wore the expression of one as he stretched out his hand, which Waterlock eagerly grasped, crying out, "Ah, dear honoured master, there's nothing and nobody else that's worth believing, not straightfor'ards and out and out. Why, squire, when I was in my trouble, if it hadn't been for the Bible,

I should have been a lost man; but there it was put—over and over again—have faith in God! be careful for nothing! And I was ready for whatever might come, being sure that what might seem to be the worst, would turn out for the best, if the Lord sent it."

"Yes," said the squire, sadly but calmly; "I think the same, Richard—I think so."

"Ah, dear master! don't mind about thinking so; believe it—there's all the difference in the world between thinking and believing; it's a mighty little bit of heart as goes into thinking, and it's put, 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;' that's believing. Oh, do trust Him, master, and whichever way things go, you'll be a blessed man—nothing can hinder it."

A grateful, pleasant smile was on the squire's face, as he returned Richard's cordial grasp.

"Charles," he said, "tell Mrs. Bonny I should like her to put up Richard here for a little time; if the worst comes, he will be a great help to us in every way."

Mr. Charles's feelings would have been too much for him if he had heard these words; but he had silently departed, the conversation being so utterly discordant with his views, and at that moment he was saying to himself, "If I had had a guess at all this, Mr. Waterlock, I

would have turned you out while the work was in hand, whatever might have come of it—what a dunce I was to bring him here now; but who could tell that things would turn out in this way?

But the thing that had most shocked the squire was, that Mr. Charles had that morning, indiscreetly, allowed to ooze out his views on the next squire—not fully, but so that the squire felt his meaning. There were other things; we will not stay to trace them; we know that when distrust begins to operate it goes on, slowly it may be, but steadily, till all at once, perhaps, it does its work.

The bell being rung, Mr. Charles returned and received the order, given with the tone and air of a master (though a most kind one), to put Richard in charge of Mrs. Bonny's hospitable care. There was no help for it, he saw; and he walked before Waterlock to the housekeeper's room in a state of mind not at all enviable.

CHAPTER IV.

What Transpired at the Lawyer's.

ET us now return to the general and Mr. Ashberry. Before following them to the lawyer's we will explain the meaning of the former, when he had, as described, glanced at his own experience in the term "counter-march," while reminding the squire that if the worst came there was no remedy; he must salute the colours.

He was what might be called "born a soldier." By nature fearless, brave, generous, the discipline of a military training had perfected his chivalrous character, and he was jealously loyal to the rule to which he had submitted. The worthy among his fellow-officers admired and loved him; but there were some unworthy, who envied his high-standing among all, and would gladly have shorn him of his glory.

Duels were the fashion of that day; any quarrel, however slight, any cause, however trivial, was sufficient to bring one about, and to refuse a challenge was to provoke disgrace and loss of caste.

Before long he received a challenge, sent on a most frivolous pretence. Some time back he would have accepted it without hesitation, but a change, and a very important one, had come over him.

The chaplain of the regiment to which he belonged had won his heart by that courtesy which flows from the constraining love of Christ. He had listened to his addresses with pleased attention, and often had felt "almost persuaded" to become an openly professed Christian; but the world with its seductions was against him, and he went on "halting between two opinions" till the arrival of the challenge forced him to choose between the two masters that were calling him to their service.

His first impulse was the natural one. Of course he must accept it, and he did; but reflection came. Had it not been clearly shown in the chaplain's exhortation, not long since, that the practice was contrary to the law of God? It certainly had; and he had been much struck by the force of what had been said. At the risk of being called "a coward,"

and what would be almost worse, "a cant," he half resolved to recall his consent to meet his adversary. While he was debating the question in much painful perplexity, the chaplain called on him, requesting a few minutes of private conversation.

He at once entered on the subject of the challenge, of which he had heard, and said, with earnest solicitude, "You will not—you surely will not accept it!"

"I have accepted it," said Kemeys.

"Oh, I entreat you, withdraw your consent!" said the chaplain.

"What! and be scouted by the whole regiment!" cried Kemeys, much excited.

"Better anything than break God's commandments," said the chaplain, adding impressively, "'Thou shalt do no murder!'"

"That isn't murder!" said Kemeys, peevishly.

"Not in the eye of the world; but in the sight of God!" replied the chaplain, who continued, "you are a great man for discipline, and are fond of the expression 'salute the colours;' is it right, then, to break the rule and defy the King of kings?"

The chaplain came off victorious; the challenge was rejected. But although all whose respect was worth having, gave him credit for a right motive, others, thoughtless and care-

less, sided with the evil-minded, and he had to run the gauntlet of contempt and ridicule till his life became a weariness to him, his natural pride and impatience making scorn and reproach intolerable.

At length, on the death of his father, when he succeeded to a moderate patrimony, he quitted the army and retired into the privacy of a country life. His genial character and attractive manners made him universally popular, and he became an especial favourite with Squire Auld, who leaned on him as a prop on all occasions.

A shade of sadness would sometimes pass over his fine countenance in moments when he seemed most hilarious; this arose, not so much from a memory of the painful past, as from a misgiving as to his hope for the future. His friend, Isaac Ashberry, was the only person to whom he felt able to confide his doubts and fears; and somehow his courage failed whenever he approached the subject even with him.

On that day he had opened much of his heart to him, and had received both light and comfort. He was so much occupied with what had passed, as they sat waiting in the office, that it was not until Mr. Ashberry recalled his attention to the business they had come on, that he remembered the squire's troubles.

"We have called respecting this letter, on the part of Mr. Auld, of Sketchnook," he said to a gentleman in black who entered. He was very thin, with a few white hairs sprinkled over an otherwise bald head.

The gentleman bowed, took the letter, and, having adjusted his spectacles, seemed to be studying it.

"Are you executor to the late Mr. Brooks?" inquired Mr. Ashberry in his bland way.

"Mr. Brooks?" murmured the gentleman.

"Ay," cried the general briskly, "what does it all mean?"

"I really . . . don't . . . understand . . . what it means," said the lawyer very slowly, looking at the letter.

"No wonder then that I couldn't!" cried the general, laughing.

"But . . .," began the gentleman again, "what does Mr. Auld want—or want to know?"

"He wants to know the meaning of that!" replied the general, striking the letter with his whip; "and he wants his title-deeds, which you have somewhere."

Finding that the old gentleman was silent, the general became a little impatient; Mr. Ashberry, seeing this, came to the rescue.

"How long," he asked, "has poor Mr. Brooks been dead?"

"What Mr. Brooks?" asked the old gentleman, very slowly, and as if musing on the question.

"Why, Mr. Brooks of the firm Brooks and Smith," cried the general, promptly.

"He is not dead, to my knowledge, and I ought to know, for *I* am Mr. Brooks of that firm," said the old gentleman, smiling.

"Couldn't have a more satisfactory witness!" exclaimed the general.

"Then how about this?" asked Mr. Ashberry, pointing to the letter.

"I see—I see how it is," said the gentleman; "yes—I see—Mr. Brooks, my cousin in America, is dead, and has left his affairs in great confusion; this letter refers to him—not to me."

"But he was not concerned in Mr. Auld's matters?" both the friends inquired.

"No, oh no!" said the old gentleman; "this letter was not intended for Mr. Auld; it was evidently misdirected." Here he rose and rang the bell, while the general and Mr. Ashberry exchanged looks of congratulation.

He held a short conference with the clerk who answered the summons; and, having delivered the letter to him with directions as to its right disposal, very briefly explained that the failure in America had brought some unpleasant involvements on him and his partner, and they feared some of their clients would be considerable sufferers.

"Not Mr. Auld; no, no; this letter was meant for another, yes, quite another party; but, we had been talking, yes, talking of Mr. Auld, and, his name running in his head, our clerk, who wrote the letter, and is now, poor young man, laid up with brain-fever, unfortunately misdirected it! I am very glad I have seen this, it explains other mistakes; yes, I am indeed."

"We will take back the title-deeds of Sketchnook," cried the general.

"You are General Kemeys?" asked Mr Brooks, glancing at the cards he had brought in and laid on the table; "and you are Mr. Ashberry, of the Wolds," he added, looking

at that gentleman. "I know you both well, by sight and reputation; yes, I will give up the deeds to you, if you will sign a notice of receipt."

This was soon done, the old man deliberately unlocking an iron safe and producing them. As he handed them to the general he added: "Ah! I wish I could satisfy all comers in like way; but, submission, yes, we must submit to the inevitable, however difficult!"

"He's a right-minded old fellow! he salutes the colours!" said the general, as in high spirits he bade his friend farewell and mounted his horse to return with all speed to Sketchnook, with the title-deeds under his arm.

He made one rush from the hall to the squire's room.

"Now, squire! up, Crusoe! give it to the squire," he cried as he entered, his good dog bearing the parchments in his mouth, and at once advancing to Mr. Auld and laying them at his feet. "Good fellow!" cried the general, patting him. "Capital news! Brooks is not dead," he added, while the squire, much bewildered, was looking at the deeds with a puzzled air.

"Not dead! who told you so?" he exclaimed.

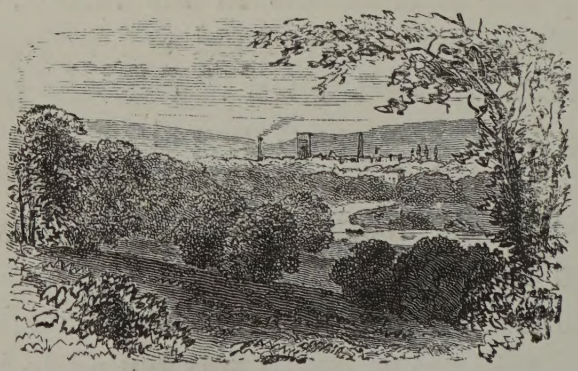
"He told me so, and I was bound to believe him!" answered the general, laughing.

He then related all that has been told, the

effect of which on Squire Auld may be better imagined than described.

"General!" he said, when he had a little recovered from his happy excitement, "I do assure you, thankful as I am, I was, I do believe, ready for the worst news you could bring—at least I hoped I was; but I am so very, very glad now, that I am afraid if it had been bad news, I should not have—no—I am sadly afraid I shouldn't have submitted, not as I ought."

"Well; you own the order book; that's something!" said the general, with his quick smile; "let us hope the next time you see Sketchnook on the wing, or any other great trouble threatening, you may be able to meet the disaster with a strong heart and a good grace!"



CHAPTER V.

The Wind-up.

LET us now return to our starting-place, Richard Waterlock's cottage. He was very busy packing up and putting away his various belongings; Stevie Treadles was equally busy helping his friend.

"Well, what changes we do live to see!" he exclaimed; "who'd ha' thought o' this move, Dick?"

Waterlock nodded, but did not seem inclined to waste time in talk.

"Dick," resumed Stevie, "there's a thing I want to know, and I'm bound you can tell it me; what do the general mean by that saying he's got so pat, 'Salute the Colours'?"

"He means you mustn't put up your back

against lawful orders, but do as you are bid at once," said Richard.

"Why don't he say so, plain?" asked Stevie.

"It's plain enough to him," replied Richard. "When soldiers or sailors see the Royal flag (that's colours, you know, Stevie) they make a bow to it, whether on land or shipboard. And so all Christian men and women must give way, without parleying, whenever they are faced with a trouble or such-like, and there's more meanings besides; but that'll do for now; we must go to work again. Only remember, Stevie, when a Christian man salutes the colours, the Holy Spirit has put it in his heart to do whatever he's ordered: if he's to bear a trouble in patience, he must be patient; if he's to be alive and work his way out of it, then he must do that; if he's put upon some work for the Lord's sake, to help his fellow-creatures, he must set on it with a good will —d'ye see, Stevie?"

"Ay, ay! I see plain enough," answered Stevie. Busy as he was, Richard could not resist this opening; he took his Bible from his pocket, adding, "Here you have it plain, Stevie," and, reading Joshua's meeting with the angel and his adoration (Joshua v. 13, 14), and his humble, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" he closed with

"Joshua was a great general, the greatest of his day, I reckon; but, soon as ever he saw 'the Captain of the Lord's Host,' he was down in the dust, ready to do all he was told, and take any order."

Stevie looked really impressed; and, leaving him to think the matter over, Waterlock went on with his work.

This work was to remove all such things as were treasured by him, leaving in his cottage only what he could now well afford to give away, for Stevie's benefit; for it had been settled that he should live at the Hall, as "Squire's head man."

But what has become of Mr. Charles? Disgusted at the confidence and favour bestowed on Richard, who, he saw, was firmly fixed in his master's favour, he resolved to strike a bold stroke and give notice. He was so strong in his opinion of his own value that he thought this would bring the squire to submission, and restore him to his old standing.

But to his amazement and confusion, the squire heard him most placidly, and said, in that case he would keep Waterlock to be his man, he would soon learn all that was to be done. You may have the Briars at a very low rent, Charles, as a recompense for your faithful services!" was the wind-up of the matter.

So Richard was installed, to Mrs. Bonny's great satisfaction, and Mr. Charles was sent up to the Briars as a tenant to her still greater delight; and very plain to all was the improvement in the household in consequence. There were no more plums spoiled by shaking the trees; no more eggs left in the nests to get addled or broken; no more stable work nor any work neglected. Sam Mealing was drilled into a good servant, and all the men and maids were brought into first-rate order.

The general was charmed with the improvement, so apparent to all.

One of Stevie's offices was to wait in the hall, that was, to hold any gentleman's horse who might call there. Very pleased he was when that gentleman chanced to be, as it often was, the general, and the general was glad to see the old man in favour, and promoted to work again.

"It was 'Dicky as did it, your honour," said Stevie, almost with tears, as the general asked him how he had got out of the shade. "Yes, and I hope I'll keep my word to him, and never forget—nohow—to do your honour's saying, and 'Salute the Colours.'"

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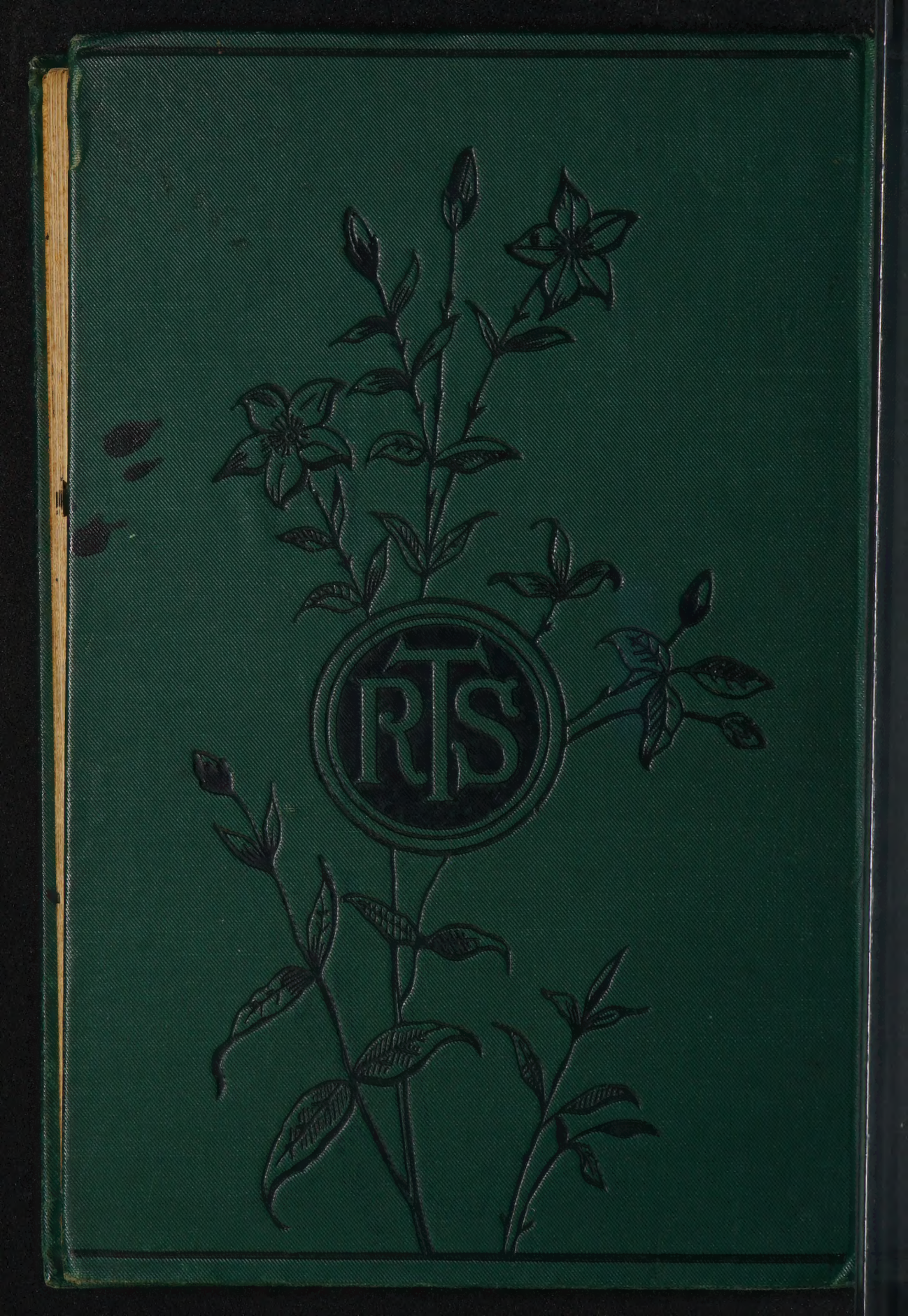
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